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THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine
of Western Ornithology

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EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Next thing in value to precise locality in the record of the occurrence of an animal, is the statement of the exact date of the observation. A perusal of some recent bird lists shows evidence of carelessness or laziness on the part of the respective authors not consistent with the scientific tone otherwise assumed. We regret the opportunity to point to a particularly virulent case in the present issue of this magazine, where a rare bird is recorded as secured in "December, 1908." The record would have been of decidedly more use, and would have impressed the reader as having been better considered by the author, if the day of the month had been included.

It may now be announced authoritatively that the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California has adopted a commendably broad policy as regards the use of its research collections. Material of any sort—birds, mammals, reptiles—will be loaned to any responsible investigator anywhere, providing, of course, that there be no conflict in interests; that is, if a certain group has already been selected by someone for study, it is not to be expected that the material in question be called in for transference to the later applicant. But the possibility of such trouble is remote. The feature to be emphasized is that the new Museum is not a cold-storage concern, but that it proposes to render its collections of widest possible use. No restrictions are imposed, save that the borrower is expected to

pay transportation charges, and to exercise reasonable care in the proper preservation of the specimens while in his keeping. The National Museum, as well as certain others of the foremost eastern institutions, has consistently pursued this generous policy, certainly without injuring either their standing or, to any material extent, their collections.

We are very glad indeed to receive direct information to the effect that there is to be a new edition of Ridgway's "Nomenclature of Colors" and this right soon. Attention is called to the letter published beyond under "Correspondence" in which Mr. Ridgway announces the scope of the work. To the systematic student of almost any group of animals, such a manual is of inestimable value; and we will all have Mr. Ridgway to thank for providing that which we have begun to need so pressingly.

Mr. Malcolm P. Anderson has again gone to the Orient to collect mammals for the British Museum. He is accompanied by an assistant and is now on his way into Central and Western China. His work will ultimately take him into Tibet.

Mr. Harry S. Swarth returned home on October 8 from an absence of over six months' duration occupied in exploring the islands of Alaska between Juneau and Dixon Entrance. His collections of birds and mammals were obtained for the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, in which institution Mr. Swarth is Assistant Curator. This material will be worked up by him during the winter, and will form the basis of a special report on the animals of southeastern Alaska.

We wish to forcibly remind subscribers to this magazine that, under the new postal regulations, we are compelled to stop sending out copies as soon as subscriptions have become delinquent. Therefore, if it is wished to avoid any break in the receipt of *THE CONDOR*, dues should be paid up promptly.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

BIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN ALASKA AND YUKON TERRITORY. By WILFRED H. OSGOOD. (=North American Fauna No. 30, Washington, October, 1909, pp. 1-96, 2 figs., plates I-V.)

The three separate reports comprising the paper deal with neighboring localities on the upper Yukon River, one in Alaska, the other two in Yukon Territory, Canada. Carefully detailed accounts are given of the physiography and flora of the various regions, while the bulk of the paper is devoted to annotated lists of the mammals and birds met with during the summers of 1903 and 1904. The greatest interest attaches to the accounts of the "big game" of the region, their habits, manner of occurrence, etc., being given in the greatest detail; in fact, more attention is paid to this portion of

the report than to any other, the birds and many of the smaller mammals being listed in a somewhat perfunctory manner.

While the lists, both of birds and mammals, are long ones, a surprisingly large number of species are included which were not met with by the parties at all, but are put in apparently because they *ought* to occur in the region covered. The value of such "records" may be fairly questioned—such as this of *Sciuropterus yukonensis*: "This fine flying squirrel doubtless inhabits the region in which we work;" or this of *Mustela americana actuosa*: "Martens can scarcely be absent from the region, but no signs of them were observed by our party;" or this of *? Buteo borealis calurus*: "Altho not positively identifiable at a distance, several of the hawks seen by us on the lower Pelly were apparently redtails"—to quote a few of the many. Surely it is not necessary to formally incorporate a species in a faunal list in order to say that it was not met with—that might fairly be taken for granted.

Under *Aquila chrysaetos*, as occurring in the Ogilvie Range, Yukon Territory, we find the statement that "young lambs of the mountain sheep were abundant and these birds doubtless secured one now and then;" which would appear to be a gratuitous slander, on these particular birds at any rate, for no evidence is produced to support the accusation. It is strange how the association of ideas always brings up the helpless lamb whenever the eagle is mentioned—both in poetry and prose he is supposed to be subsisting largely on such a diet, just as the "chicken hawk" of the populace is continually on the lookout for poultry. Possibly there is as much ground for the one supposition as the other.

Some of the bird notes are of great interest, such as those on the Western Solitary Sandpiper (page 35), on the Spotted Sandpiper and Northern Shrike (page 36), on the Wandering Tatler (page 86), and many others besides, tho most of the species are dismissed with the bare mention of their occurrence. *Myadestes townsendi* and *Junco hyemalis montanus* were secured for the first time in Alaska, while adults and young of *Leucosticte tephrocotis* were secured in midsummer on Glacier Mountain, Alaska, adding another to the very few localities in which the species has been found breeding. In the treatment of the birds the rulings of the A. O. U. Committee have been strictly adhered to in every case.

On reading the paper thru it is evident that the author's greatest interest lay with the "big game" and the fur-bearing mammals; and while no one will feel inclined to quarrel with him on that account, for they are most ably and interestingly treated, it seems a pity that the smaller fry from such an interesting region

should be dismissed with such scant notice.—H. S. S.

CORRESPONDENCE

Editor THE CONDOR:

Being under the impression that practically everyone interested in the subject knew that I have been engaged, "off and on," for about twenty years, in the preparation of a work to supersede my old "Nomenclature of Colors" (long out of print, and manifestly seriously defective in the inadequate number of colors represented, their unscientific arrangement, and the bad method of their reproduction), your note in the last number of THE CONDOR was somewhat of a surprise to me. It seems proper, therefore, that I should formally announce the final completion of the laborious task begun so long ago, that the work is now in the hands of the firm who is to reproduce the plates, and that the book will be published sometime before next spring.

The new work has been very carefully planned and executed, and I have every reason to believe will fully meet all the requirements of those who have use for it. There will be about 1350 colors (instead of the 186 of the old work), and these will be reproduced by a method which insures not only a correct copy of the originals but absolute uniformity throughout the entire edition. Altho it will manifestly be impossible to name all the colors, those which are not named, and also the *intermediates*, both as to hue and tone, may be easily designated by an exceedingly simple system of symbols, which is practically equivalent to the representation of more than 5300 colors sufficiently distinct from one another to be readily differentiated by the normal eye. The standards of the "Nomenclature of Colors" of 1886 are of course preserved. The book will be the same size as the old one except for thickness which will not be very much greater, since all the text and plates of the old work which do not pertain to color are eliminated and the text re-written. Notwithstanding the great expense of its preparation and publication and the fact that there are more than seven times as many colors represented, the price will be but little more.

Very truly yours,

ROBERT RIDGWAY
Washington, D. C.; September 6, 1909

Editor THE CONDOR:

I notice that I have been quoted as taking a stand against the recognition of minute differences in naming races (CONDOR XI, no. 2, pp. 66-67). My intention in said instance (CONDOR XI, no. 1, p. 32) was entirely the opposite. Mr. Linton seemed to be decrying the inability to distinguish minute racial characteristics and I endeavored to show that the adjective "microscopic" was perhaps applicable only to the